



2009/2010

AMADOR COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY
FINAL REPORT



June, 2010

CRIMINAL JUSTICE
PINE GROVE YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP

INTRODUCTION:

The 2009/2010 Amador County Civil Grand Jury conducted the required inspection and review of the Pine Grove Youth Conservation Camp (PGYCC) on October 29, 2009.

BACKGROUND:

PGYCC is located two miles east of Pine Grove on Aqueduct-Volcano Road. It was built in the 1930s as a civilian conservation camp. When the California Youth Authority acquired the camp in 1945, it became the first of six Youth Conservation Camps in the state. PGYCC is a division of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Division of Juvenile Justice (CDCR-DJJ), and is operated in conjunction with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (CALFIRE). It is dedicated to the rehabilitation and education of incarcerated young men and to the conservation of California's natural resources. PGYCC is the oldest, continuously operated Youth Conservation Camp in California.

PGYCC is a privilege-based program. Qualifying youths must meet strict criteria before placement in the camp. The youths receive training in wild land firefighting by CALFIRE. They are required to advance their education and participate in programs designed to improve life skills. The PGYCC provides fire protection throughout California, performs local community services, and prepares the young men for successful re-entry into society.

The housing, education, health care, and youth programs are funded by the CDCR-DJJ.

Fire fighting and "Grade Projects" (Facts #16, 17) are funded by CALFIRE. Both the land and the facility are owned by CALFIRE, which is responsible for its maintenance and water supply.

RESPONSIBLE AGENCY:

PINE GROVE YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT of CORRECTIONS & REHABILITATION, DIVISION of JUVENILE JUSTICE
13630 Aqueduct-Volcano Road
P.O. Box 1040
Pine Grove, CA 95665

JUSTIFICATION/JURISDICTION:

California Penal Code § 919(b). The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.

METHOD OF EVALUATION:

INTERVIEWS & TOUR

- Interview with CDCR-DJJ Chief
- Interview with CALFIRE Chief
- Interview with CDCR-DJJ Captain
- Interview with CALFIRE Captain

- Tour of the facility

DOCUMENTS

- Informational Sheet
- Camp Fact Sheet
- Fire Hours Report
- Staff News, Department of the Youth Authority, State of California, June 20, 2003
A Day at Fire Preparedness Training Exercises with Pine Grove Crews
- Staff News, Department of the Youth Authority, State of California, November 7, 2003
All YA Camp Crews Home – No Injuries and a Job Done Well
- October 26, 2005
Pine Grove Camp commemorates 60th anniversary
- CDCR Today, April 7, 2009
Pine Grove Youth Conservation Camp Firefighters Raise Nearly \$575 for Amador County Charity
- CDCR Today, April 14, 2009
Pine Grove Youth Firefighters Attend Foothills Play
Pine Grove Youth Conservation Camp Crew Rescues Injured Hiker
- Family Justice News & Updates, July 8, 2009
A Model for Juvenile Justice Reentry Planning
- Youth Incentive News, Vol. 1, Issue 5, Page 3
Why Pine Grove Camp is Different
- *Points of Light* (flyer)
- Photos

FACTS:

1. At the time of the Grand Jury visit, 77 youths were enrolled. The facility is capable of housing 120. Their ages range from 18 to 25. Occasionally a young man can begin at age 17 providing he reaches his 18th birthday by the time his fire training is completed. No one under the age of 18 is allowed to participate in fire suppression activities with CALFIRE.
2. Juveniles at PGYCC must have been convicted of a crime prior to the age of 18. They are granted the privilege of coming to PGYCC from other institutions because of good behavior.
3. Crimes that disqualify a candidate from PGYCC include sexual offenses, arson, and most Category 1 offenses, such as murder.
4. The wards at PGYCC must be California residents.
5. Certain mental and physical health requirements must be met. Medical problems can be an obstacle to being placed at PGYCC. A case management worker from the Intake Unit determines an individual's competence in advance.
6. PGYCC's Limitation Parole Requirement specifies that an individual must have between 6 to 36 months remaining before release.
7. There is zero tolerance of gang activity at PGYCC. Each young man must make a commitment to stop all gang involvement at the time of his assignment.

8. The average stay for a ward of PGYCC is 13 months. Each is expected to be on a CALFIRE crew after an extensive training program.
9. The CDCR-DJJ has a four-point program:
 - **GROUP LIVING**
Individuals learn respect for rules and staff, and how to improve interaction with others.
 - **COUNSELING**
Participation is required. Each individual is assigned a Youth Correctional Counselor, who sees to it that he gets the counseling appropriate to his needs. The average youth-to-counselor ratio is less than 7 to 1. Case conferences are held every 30 days.
 - **EDUCATION**
The high school diploma program is administered by the CDCR-DJJ. Graduation is the number one goal. Higher education can be obtained through college courses designed for incarcerated students.
 - **EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS**
The needs of an individual are identified and a plan set up based upon those needs. Upon parole, each youth is provided with 3 to 7 job referrals.
10. Staff receives training in violence prevention and control and use of force. Mental health problems are quickly identified and a counselor referral made. There are no psychotropic or behavior control drugs administered.
11. A youth count is conducted every 30 minutes, whether they are participating on strike teams, in community crews, or at the facility.
12. Privileges are given on a phase system; those at a higher phase get more privileges. This system encourages them to work harder, attain their educational goals, and be more productive members of their crews. Any credits or points earned on the phase system may contribute to an early parole.
13. The daily PT program requires each individual to run, work out in the weight room, and participate in evening sports. All are encouraged to participate in competitive athletic programs. A sports field is under construction and the staff hopes that other entities in the community will hold sporting events at the camp. At this time, PGYCC participates in Pine Grove Softball and Jackson Baseball Leagues.
14. An individual "corrective action plan" is developed for each youth to help him adjust to his program. If he is unable to adapt to PGYCC requirements, he can be returned to a higher level institution.
15. The primary responsibility of PGYCC is to assist in fire fighting. CALFIRE supervises a total of four Type 1 Hand Crews, consisting of 15 individuals per crew and a captain. CALFIRE takes strike teams throughout California.
16. The PGYCC employability training is conducted in partnership with CALFIRE. Each youth is given a year-round employment assignment. During the summer, hand crews participate in statewide fire suppression. In winter, the crews perform tasks at the county and city level, referred to as Grade Projects.
17. Grade Projects are community service work such as brush removal, creek maintenance, and other contracted projects. The community work crew can only benefit small city and county government entities.
18. Some agencies using the community work crew are charged for their services, but no more than \$200/day. That amount helps PGYCC to re-coup its costs.

19. Crew members are paid by voucher system. One half of any money earned goes toward restitution.

STATE BUDGETARY CONCERNS:

1. In 2009, it was not anticipated that PGYCC would be affected by state or federal budget cuts. PGYCC has been an asset to the state and to CALFIRE, and the program has been well supported by the state Legislature and the Governor.
2. To reduce costs in 2010, the state is now looking at a population reduction between the two remaining fire camps in Pine Grove and Ventura. If a population reduction should become necessary, PGYCC would have to transfer some of its wards to regular adult CDCR facilities, and one of the two camps might be required to close.
3. PGYCC and CALFIRE have successfully arbitrated CALFIRE budget cuts for the past 3 years.
4. There are state hiring and spending freezes currently in effect.

FINDINGS:

1. At PGYCC, members of the various gangs are required to live and work together. No gang activity is tolerated. A youth will be immediately transferred to another institution if this policy is violated.
2. Both the CDCR-DJJ and CALFIRE staff work to build a good relationship with each youth, using professional courtesy when addressing them. As a result, PGYCC has evolved from a strict military atmosphere to a more interactive one.
3. The youths placed at PGYCC are considered the "cream of the crop." The staff feels responsible for making each one succeed in the program. A low rate of recidivism at PGYCC (28%) compares favorably to national figures (60-70%).
4. Youths learn a strong work ethic. Many of them have grown up on the streets without an opportunity to acquire social and work-related skills. PGYCC focuses on steering them toward becoming productive members of society.
5. A concerted effort is made to find job opportunities for each young man. Case Managers keep in touch with them through phone follow-ups.
6. The State of California benefits significantly from PGYCCs low cost, high quality firefighting resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Retain PGYCC as a joint CALFIRE and CDCR-DJJ facility, because of its tremendous success as both a fire-fighting resource and as an institution for successful rehabilitation.
2. Model more juvenile rehabilitation facilities after PGYCC.

RESPONSE REQUIRED:

Pursuant to California Penal Code § 933(c) response to this report is required *No later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations...* California Law, n.d.

◆◆◆◆